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TRIBUNAL MILITAIRE INTERNATIONAL des GRANDS CRIMINELS de GUERRE

Filed Jan. 19, 1946

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INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL
NURNBERG, GERMANY
NF Exhibit 113
Filed 1/21/46

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Testimony of ERNST RANIS,
taken at Nurnberg, Germany
on 1 November 1945, by
LT. COL. THOMAS S. HINKEL, IGD. OUSCC.
Reporter: Nancy M. Shields SCV.
Interpreter: Siegfried Kamler.

The interrogation opened at 10:25 a.m.

COL. HINKEL TO INTERPRETER:

Q Do you solemnly swear that you will truly and faithfully translate my questions from English into German and the responses of the witness from German into English, so help you God?

A I do.

COL. HINKEL TO WITNESS THROUGH INTERPRETER:

Q Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

A I do.

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL
NUERNBERG, GERMANY
RF Exhibit 113
Filed 1/20/46

Q What is your name?

A ERNST RANIS.

Q Where were you born?

A Frankfurt-on-Main; 24th August 1886.

Q Are you married?

A Yes.

Q Do you have any children?

A One son.

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Q What was the last official position that you held in the German Government?

A I was a secretary at the Roges (Raw Production) Limited Company.

Q What was the nature of the duties that you performed?

A I was chief of the department for the loot, or booty.

Q Would you mind explaining just exactly what you did?

A The military posts, when they were in the front, usually sent back all the booty to the homeland as far as it was not necessary for their own equipment at the front.

Q Was this booty that was sent back, sent to your department?

A It was sent to the several distribution railway stations on the German frontier from the West - Gutesloho, Essen, Trier and Bebra. In the east there were some similar stations including Eydtkau, East Prussia.

Q After this booty was sent to those distribution centers, did your organization pick it up from there?

A On the so-called distribution railway junctions, there were representatives of the Army, Air Force and Traffic Ministry, customs officials and one representative of the firm Roges.

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Q What type of material did your firm deal in?

A With all those materials that were not taken over by the Wehrmacht. That is, those that didn't fit within the framework of the Wehrmacht.

Q What materials, for example?

A For instance, timber, oil or skins, leather or oil or articles of uniform that could not be used by the Wehrmacht. They were usually dyed and used for laborers inside Germany. Some communication equipment, equipment of airplanes, some equipment of the French Navy, and similar things like that.

Q Was your company a private company?

A No. At first, it belonged to the Ministry of Economics and the OKW and after 1942, the ownership was taken over by the Speer Ministry. I have given a detailed report about that in Camp Freising, where I stated all these facts exactly. It was a report comprising 25 pages. In this report I described the organization and the economy in France in comparison to the organization in Russia and how they were connected with each other.

Q From whom did you receive instructions regarding the operation of your department?

A Generally from the OKW. The firm was composed of two departments; one department, which I have mentioned before, was the booty department, and I was the head; the other department was the so-called Buyers' Department. The Buyers' Department received their directions from the 4-Year-Plan, from the Ministry of Economics, or from the Speer Ministry.

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Q Now the materials received by your department were not paid for; is that right?

A As far as it was purely booty, property of the enemy or the enemy Wehrmacht. They were not paid, but the following occurred: For instance, the Wehrmacht, during the course of their operations, might have occasion to order a certain area to be cleared. When this area was cleared, many of the properties were taken back, but those properties often included civilian property.

Q Was any payment made for civilian property?

A Yes. Those civilian properties were paid for from the profits that were made from the booty. They had been paid for when requested.

Q Requested by whom?

A Requests were made by French or Belgian owners of the property.

Q You mean claims would be submitted by the owners of the property and those claims, if they were just claims, would be paid?

A Yes.

Q To whom would these claims be submitted?

A Generally, they came to the military commander, and through him to us. I remember that we paid approximately 30,000,000 marks in France to pay for these properties.

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Q Were claims made by the civilians in all cases for the property that had been taken from them by the military?

A I cannot judge that, because this property went without any papers or invoices.

Q You know the property that was received, do you not?

A I don't quite understand that.

Q You know the amount of civilian property that was obtained by your organization - that is, civilian property as opposed to captured enemy material?

A In order to give you an example, I have to tell you that I could not differentiate between a contingent, say, of turpentine oil, which came, say, from the French Marine, or a contingent of turpentine oil which came from civilian sources. But if, for instance, later on, I would receive an invoice from a firm in Bordeaux, telling me "We have loaded a wagon number so-and-so with a load of turpentine oil", and if we actually had received that contingent, I paid it.

Q What about the eastern front?

A On the eastern front some of the properties that came from the three border states, Estland, Lithuania and Letland, were paid for; properties from the rest of Russia were not paid for.

Q Why was this difference made?

A Because one had the point of view that there is no private property in Russia.

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Q Were any claims made by Russian civilians for property taken?

A No, never.

Q What compensation was paid for the property taken from the three border states?

A The owners of the property taken from the three states I mentioned, received 60% of the value of the properties that were taken from them; the rest - 40% - was kept as compensation for customs and transportation.

Q You mentioned that your instructions came from the Wehrmacht. What part of the Wehrmacht?

A The Economic Department of the OKW.

Q Under whose direction and supervision was that department?

A It changed several times. At first it was General Thomas, then General Becht, and after that, General Becker. These points are mentioned in my exposee.

Q I would like to have you tell me about these things in your own words, even though you have previously submitted a statement.

What was the nature of the instructions that you received from those officers?

A The only order that was given to us from them was to send a representative down to a distribution point.

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Q In other words, you would be notified of the establishment of a distribution center or the arrival of a substantial shipment of booty?

A The first instructions,we received by way of a letter from OKW Economic Department, dated 10 May 1940.

Q What were those instructions?

A At that time the railway junctions Gutesloho, Essen, Trier and Bebra, were mentioned to us and we were told to go there and evaluate the different properties assembled at those junctions and the distribution went according to a directive of the different economic Reichsposts. I don't know if you are acquainted with them - there were posts for timber, posts for tobacco, posts for oil - and they gave us directions to which firms those articles were to be distributed and they also fixed the prices.

Q Did those private firms pay your organization for the materials furnished them by you or was some other organization paid?

A Yes, they paid us, and then we sent the money to the Reich Main Treasury. From all those monies that were collected by us, we paid the claims which have been mentioned before.

Q Now after the organization was taken over by the Speer Ministry in 1942, from whom did you receive instructions as to the manner in which you should operate?

A Just as before, we carried on receiving instructions

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from the OKW.

Q In other words, there was no substantial change in the chain of command?

A Not so far as the booty was concerned.

Q I still don't understand the instructions which you received from the OKW. Were those instructions anything more than notifications of the location and presence of shipments from the various military fronts?

A We didn't receive any notifications of any shipments at all but we were merely informed about the presence of the articles at the railway junctions by the commissions that were present there. They might, perhaps, be informed that this railway distribution center would be moved from one place to another.

Q What instructions were issued by the OKW?

A They might only, perhaps, have told us that railway station X was going to be moved to some place called Y, and what we had to do was to transfer our representative from one station to another.

Q Did you ever receive instructions from the OKW as to the manner in which you should operate the distribution and how you should distribute the goods handled by your organization?

A Those instructions that we just mentioned now, also came on 10 May 1940, from the Ministry of Economy, and were issued by General Hannecken, who was also on the board of

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the firm Roges.

Q In these instructions, what were you told to do?

A We were told that first consideration would have to be given to the three armed forces - the Army, Air Force and Marine. Second consideration would have to be given to the needs of the railways, which would be coal, timber and so on, and whatever was necessary for transportation. Then the needs would go to general economy for all the properties that could not be absorbed by the armed forces or the railways.

Q Do you consider that 10 May 1940, is the date that your organization began its operations?

A On 10 May 1940 our predecessor, the Economic Research Company, carried out that task.

Q You mean before 10 May 1940, your predecessor carried it out?

A The Roges was only founded in February 1941 and then took over the organization of the "WIFO", meaning "Economic Research Company". Then the Main Trustee Department East carried out the same functions during the Polish campaign and the "HAFRO", a company for industrial production, had carried on similar business ever since 1930, with the Far East. All these three organizations were absorbed by Roges in February 1942.

Q Did your department do anything except handle the distribution of the goods obtained from the distribution centers? In other words, was there any processing?

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A We also handled the distribution of properties which could not be returned to the owners as a result of air attacks, when these goods were in transit and neither the owners nor the people they were sent to could be reached. It was our task then, to distribute them.

Q You didn't take a shipment of uniforms, for example, and process them for workers' clothing?

A We didn't carry through any shipments at all, but merely took over these goods given to us from the military posts.

Q My question was whether or not, after your organization had obtained the goods, did it do anything to those goods except to send them to different private firms?

A No.

Q Did your organization make recommendations to the Wehrmacht regarding the types of enemy material that were needed in the German economy and therefore should be picked up in the occupied territories?

A No. We had no basis to do that.

Q Were you ever requested to make any recommendation on that subject ?

A No.

Q Who, in the Speer Ministry was in charge of your operations?

A Professor Dr. Hetlager.

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Q What amount of material do you estimate that your company handled during the course of the entire war?

A Up to the 31st December, we had a turnover of 350,000,000 Reichsmarks, which is net earning, and freight, customs and claims had been deducted. I have also submitted this list together with the report that I have given to you in Freising. I have divided this list into the different countries of France, Italy, Serbia and Russia.

Q Can you remember now the approximate breakdown of that 350,000,000 Reichsmarks?

A To the various countries?

Q Yes.

A I cannot tell you that from my recollection but the box with all my files came over with me from Freising.

Q Your report at Freising was based on the files then available to you?

A Yes. The files were put at my disposal in Freising. All my files were picked up by the Documentation Division of the Third Army and taken along to Freising, and on the basis of these documents I have made my report.

Q Do you recall how much was paid out by your organization in the form of claims?

A 30,000,000 marks, I remember, was the figures for France.

Q How about Holland and Belgium and other countries?

A In France we paid over 30,000,000 to satisfy such

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claims. I don't know what amounts we paid in Belgium and Holland. It is not in my recollection.

Q Did you ever hold any conversation with Keitel or Jodl or any other OKW officer with regard to your activities?

A No. I had only business with Col. Tietze and sometimes with General Becht.

Q Did you ever have any conversation with Hitler or Ribbentrop or any of the other people connected with foreign affairs, regarding your operations?

A No.

Q Did your operation include materials other than of an industrial nature, such as oil and timber and captured enemy material, ordnance, and so on?

A Yes; all kinds of material. For instance, medical equipment of all kinds and equipment that could not be used by the Wehrmacht.

Q How about house furnishings?

A This has occurred in the East at the time the clearing had started. We also had to handle German property, i.e. refugee property - certain property that had to be left behind because of the clearing of cities. In that case, we had to gather all that and if we could not locate the owners, distribute it to the German economy. Much of it was used by the N.S.V.

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Q What is the N.S.V.?

A The Public Welfare Organization.

Q Is there any further statement you wish to make or any further information you have to give regarding the matters about which you have been questioned this morning?

A The last task we received originated from the Ministry of Economy and we received that task in November, 1944, and it referred to the handling of properties from the Adriatic ports and Trieste and so on. However, this task could not be carried through because of the war situation.

Q How long were you connected with this Roges company?

A Ever since it was founded. Before that, I had worked for "WIFO" as a secretary; then I was taken over into the new firm.

COL. HINKEL: That will be all.

The interrogation was closed at 11:00 a.m.

APPROVED: _____
Interrogator

S. Ramler
Interpreter

Nancy M Shields
Reporter

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RANIS---end

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